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CIA Has Eye On And Freedom Party

CIA 1.0 4 Black, Suzanne
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The Central Intelligence Agency kept "indexes" on more 50,000 Peace and Freedom Party members in the early 1970s and continues to maintain files on their active members and leaders for inter-agency "security clearances," according to files released by the CIA and given to The Sentinel Friday by PFP leaders.

"We are outraged that an intelligence agency that is not supposed to be involved in domestic matters should be investigating any citizen for his or her political affiliations," Maureen Smith, party chairwoman, said Saturday.

The files, released under the Freedom of Information Act and after a year's wait by the PFP, include three memoranda concerning the CIA's keeping of files on PFP and a number of reports from the anti-war era that include at least one surveillance report.

While interpreting the files is difficult because of the numerous deletions for "national security" purposes, it is clearly stated in three memos—one to the agency and two responses—that indexing of "some 50,000 names and addresses of registered members of the California PFP" was done and the "selective indexing would remain."

The CIA notes that its "maintaining" of records is done by the Office of Security, a component of the CIA, to make certain that it can identify PFP members who want to work for the agency.

The Sentinel called CIA headquarters in Washington, D.C., and was told by Public Information Officer Susan Black that if the 1976 document was the latest document in the packet, then it should represent the present policy of the agency.

When questioned if the CIA is actively adding to the files and the number of PFP members in the files, Black said she would seek

answers and call back Tuesday.

The files touch on the dirty tricks of the 1972 election, stating "(deletion) notes that the Republican Party reportedly contributed some funds, although minimal toward the funding of the PFP in 1972 and seems to be suggesting that this is (sic) some way tends to legitimize the PFP, whereas, in fact, it was a political ploy designed to draw votes away from their main opponent, the Democratic Party."

Whether or not the CIA opened files for purposes other than its own "security clearances" is not clear.

It began its files during the 1969-71 anti-war era and when the PFP supported Black Panther leader Eldredge Cleaver for U.S. President.

Cleaver since then has become a born-again Christian.

In a memorandum to the agency (initiator and recipient are deleted), dated March 20, 1974, it states:

"In 1969 and 1970 the Office of Security indexed into the (blank) nearly 50,000 names and addresses of persons who were registered members of the California Peace and Freedom Party.

"Subsequently, hundreds of additional names of persons who have been linked with the PFP have been incorporated into (blank)."

The memo asks the names be deleted.

In a response, apparently from the agency, dated May 6, 1974:

"The actual indexing during this period of some 50,000 names and addresses of registered members of the California PFP received from the (blank) was undoubtedly deemed justified and was based on policy emanating from the Director of Security's office."

"Such indexing of a name did not automatically connote something derogatory about the individual but was deemed to be done for lead (?) purposes only."

The memo notes that the indexing "required considerable effort by (blank) to accomplish."

It goes on:

"While the question of the value of the indexing of the CPFP list may be somewhat moot, it is this writer's opinion that, even in today's climate wherein field investigation becomes increasingly difficult, elimination of these names from the (blank) would not represent any significant loss to the Office of Security capabilities."

"Two line blank."

"It is understood, of course, that the selective indexing to the PFP file would remain."

Lew Cannon, secretary of the Los Angeles area PFP and Smith, who lives in Aptos, say they will encourage persons who were registered in the party in the early years to write in for their files.

Even as the memos appear to state that the CIA's files were kept to assure its own personnel hiring practices included screening of PFP members, a May 6, 1974 memo says:

"It was during this period (1968 to 1971 or longer) that the Office of Security was being asked for its professional opinion relative to a number of persons, organizations, created and tasked with maintaining a capability to respond to intelligence inquiries in this area."

In addition the Agency established a much larger unit in (blank) under (blank) with a major interest in this as well as other areas."

McCannon believes the index of 50,000 PFP members from the early 1970s still exists and contradicts the CIA's reporting earlier that it kept files on (only) 10,000 Americans.

"Now it appears a gross understatement," McCannon said, "and Lord knows the extent of this nationwide."

He said that many of the names must be of liberal Democrats who in 1972 registered in the PFP in order to vote for a "an anti-war candidate."

The PFP started in the late 1960s and has since become the party of the socialists.

It is one of four recognized ballot parties in California which include